

City of Tacoma Middle Waterway Restoration Project

For more than 100 years, the man-made waterways of Commencement Bay bustled with high-profile commercial activities.

Unfortunately, this enthusiastic progress and development came at the expense of the many natural functions provided by the Puyallup River delta. While salt marsh is a high intertidal habitat that is covered by water for brief periods, it provides key components in the food web that feeds the health of the Bay. In 1997, with habitat restoration a high

priority, the City of Tacoma finalized an agreement with the Commencement Bay Natural Resource Trustees to restore the Middle Waterway. After 2 years of design and permitting, workers from RCI Environmental, Inc., removed nearly 16,000 yards of contaminated soil then lowered the grade of the area 6 to 10 feet to salt marsh

elevations. RCI trucked in 7,600 yards of clean, healthy soil to cover the site.

In late 2000 and early 2001, hundreds of volunteers vegetated the area with native plants. You'll find trees and shrubs such as Big-leaf Maple, Red Alder, Madrona, Shore Pine, Hazelnut, Oceanspray, Nootka Rose, and Hooker's willow on the

riparian area (banks). Native salt marsh plants include hairgrass, saltgrass, Jaumea and pickleweed. These plantings complement the existing Simpson Tacoma Kraft/Trustee restoration site along the east side of the waterway.

The City will monitor the Middle Waterway site for a minimum of 5 years.



Before restoration

1997



During restoration

2000



Planting

2000



The \$1.4 million Middle Waterway Restoration Project was funded by the City of Tacoma with assistance from the Washington State Department of Ecology's MTCA grant program and the Commencement Bay Natural Resource Trustees: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe.

This walkway is dedicated to Charles Van Volkenburg for his many contributions to the project, including the land for the walkway.

